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ABSTRACT

In an effort to develop a process for measuring institutional effectiveness, the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges and the Center on Education and Training for Employment sent a questionnaire to the 46 member institutions of the Alliance asking them to define institutional effectiveness and to list factors for measuring it. A seven-member task force, using the Developing A Curriculum (DACUM) process to reach group consensus, edited, refined, and synthesized the information collected from the survey to develop an institutional assessment model in chart form. The task force defined institutional effectiveness as the process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals, and using the data to form assessments in an ongoing cycle of goal setting and planning. The Alliance developed six "areas of inquiry" considered crucial to the mission of two-year institutions: (1) access and equity (2) employment preparation and placement; (3) college/university transfer; (4) economic development; (5) college/community partnerships; and (6) cultural and cross-cultural development. A total of 38 "outcome" (rather than the traditional "process") indicators were identified. This report presents the assessment model in a chart format, listing the six areas of inquiry and the different indicators which can be used to assess an institution's success in each area. Instructions on using the chart to build an assessment instrument, background on the development of the model, the Center's mission statement, and a 60-item bibliography are included. (JMC)

Indicators of Institutional Effectiveness:

A Guide for Assessing Two-Year Colleges

ED325193

by

Gary M. Grossman
Mary Ellen Duncan

1989

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NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGES

The National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges is a consortium of community, technical, and junior colleges from across the United States whose mission is to promote excellence in postsecondary vocational, technical, career, and occupational education.

The Alliance fulfills this mission in several ways: sharing resources, networking, finding solutions to common problems, providing common avenues for organizational development, conducting professional development activities, and securing financial resources.

This document is the result of the Alliance's commitment to addressing important substantive issues. More specifically, the document is the summary of the work of the Alliance's Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness and the collective thinking and experiences of representatives from 43 colleges nationwide.

The following individuals provided leadership in the development of this work by serving on the Task Force on Institutional Effectiveness.

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INDICATORS OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS: A PROCESS FOR ASSESSING 2-YEAR COLLEGES

by

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Foreword

The community and technical college system in America has experienced a major transformation during the past 25 years. With roots in the junior college system and the traditional responsibility of providing students with access to 4-year baccalaureate programs, these institutions have grown in terms of number, size, and scope of their missions. Most recently, however, questions have been raised as to the effectiveness with which colleges are serving their communities. This document summarizes one approach to addressing the issue of institutional effectiveness.

The study on which this document is based is the result of the work of the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges, in conjunction with the Center on Education and Training for Employment. The process introduced here for measuring institutional effectiveness takes into account those issues with which all colleges generally deal, and yet, it is flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of schools in the 2-year college community.

The Center wishes to thank those who participated in this important contribution to postsecondary education. Special appreciation is expressed to the membership of the Alliance, specifically the Task Force on Assessing Institutional Effectiveness. Indeed, the Alliance's leadership in establishing a standard of excellence for community and technical colleges in the United States is exemplified by the Task Force's commitment to making this document relevant and applicable. Members of the Task Force included Dr. Mary Ellen Duncan, Chair, Catonsville Community College; Dr. Donald H. Cameron, Guilford Technical Community College; Dr. Luene Corwin, Manchester Community College; Dr. William Miller, Columbus State Community College; Dr. Judith A. Maxson, Hocking Technical College; and Dr. Donald P. Altieri, Catawba Valley Community College.

Appreciation is also extended to Center staff who served under the direction of Dr. Mark Newton, Associate Director at the Center and Director of the National Alliance. Staff included Dr. Gary M. Grossman, Project Director; Ms. Laurian Miguel who provided technical and logistical support; Ms. Catharine Warmbrod who served as a key consultant; Ms. Mary LaBelle and Ms. Monyeene Elliott who provided typing support; and Ms. Judy Balogh who provided editorial assistance.

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Ray D. Ryan, Executive Director
Center on Education and Training
for Employment
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The Issue

As the roles of community and technical colleges have become increasingly important in the context of a rapidly changing society, there has been an understandable demand for these schools to provide various publics with information regarding institutional effectiveness. This demand has its clear converse in the educational equation, however. From the schools' point of view, scopes of responsibility have increased, whereas available funds to meet these needs have declined (Losak 1988; Parnell 1988). Community and technical colleges, therefore, are being asked by their communities to better define and position themselves, but also to defend their progress toward that self-definition (Ashcroft 1986). Schools, on the other hand, need to make a case for funding priorities. Clearly, part of the need for systematic efforts to measure institutional effectiveness stems from the necessity of communication between constituent groups and the college.

In addition to these external demands are internal pressures. Community and technical colleges are often on the front lines of change in American postsecondary education. They must interpret and respond variously to challenges involved in preparing the nation's work force for the demands of a rapidly changing world, both socially and technologically. They also must provide much of the population with access to 4-year colleges and professional preparation. Likewise, literacy, adult training/retraining, and technology transfer opportunities increasingly are placed at the doorstep of local postsecondary institutions.

Every community and technical college must face these issues. Indeed, their obvious goal is an effective response; yet the need has never been greater nor the challenges more consequential. What is lacking currently is a mechanism for measuring institutional effectiveness that is responsive to external constituencies while also providing appropriate and useful feedback to the institutions themselves (Losak 1988).

The need for appropriate assessment of institutional effectiveness has been acknowledged by those in and out of education. It also has been reflected by the growth of recent reports and research papers addressing these questions. One such publication is a document by a task force of the National Governors' Association (Ashcroft 1986). This document addresses the degree to which "learning" is taking place in postsecondary education. Although the task force devotes much of its attention to the problems of the 4-year institution, community and technical colleges by no means are exempted from its recommendations. In any case, the report does document the fact that decision makers are increasingly concerned about the role of institutions of higher education. Given that the composition of the task force is made up of the nation's governors, one can conclude that it represents a clear signal from state authority.

Among the specific recommendations made by the Ashcroft (1986) report is a call for "systematic programs that use multiple measures to assess undergraduate learning." Additionally, the report acknowledges obstacles, among which are the variability of institutional missions and the lack of appropriate instruments. Hence, any model of institutional effectiveness would need to address these obstacles.

The impact of the Ashcroft report is evidenced by the variety of studies completed since its release. Edwards (1987), for example, urges community colleges to develop research models to assess output, affirm the importance of teaching and learning, reward teaching excellence, and reassess the hierarchy of the educational enterprise. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) (1987) reports that traditional measures of institutional effectiveness (e.g., enrollment and degrees awarded) lack meaning, that a "quality gap" exists between institutions of higher learning, and that the effects of "open enrollment" and other equity considerations have not been measured effectively. SREB offers 24 specific recommendations, many of which pertain to the need to measure institutional effectiveness. The SREB report in many ways reflects a synthesis of both research-based and policy-driven concerns about the degree to which colleges and universities are fulfilling their respective missions.

Indeed, the expressions of need for appropriate measures of institutional effectiveness abound, both in formal and informal contexts. But what, in fact, are "appropriate" measures? Although to some degree the literature begs the question, it at least achieves a consensus about what is "inappropriate." The tendency, and perhaps pressure, for an institution to measure only that which it may demonstrate successful achievement is, SREB implies, one obstacle. Further, colleges traditionally have measured enrollment changes as a criterion of effectiveness. However, enrollment variation is subject to many influences, shifts in local economies being one of them. As such, these data characterize only how many persons are registered, not how well they are "learning" (Richardson 1988; Ewell 1988). Finally, Dodson (1987) and Ewell (1985) allege a lack of clarity in the definition and operationalization of quality.

The literature also specifies other considerations relative to institutional effectiveness measurements. Hammons (1987) and Ewell (1985) suggest that the entire area is plagued with a profound lack of leadership and responsibility, among other problems. It is necessary, therefore, for community and technical colleges to step forward, demonstrate a capacity for leadership, and confront the quality issue aggressively, or someone else may do it for them, perhaps according to criteria the institutions may find unacceptable. Additionally, although many colleges are in the business of formal measurement in some fashion, there is little apparent agreement about what measures should be considered (McLeod and Carter 1986). Not incidentally, there is some resistance to the hint of a comparison between colleges. Moreover, the institutional research capacities of various colleges differ in part due to time and money allocation conflicts. A final consideration is that few instruments for measurement exist (Hammons 1987), fewer still that measure "appropriate" aspects of the role of community and technical colleges. Obviously, an implicit suggestion called for in the list of "inappropriate" concerns is an exploration of what, in fact, should be measured.

With this in mind, Richardson (1987) urges a focus on outcomes. Earlier, Richardson (1985) emphasized the importance of quantifiable data in this regard, avoiding body counts, but still providing some relatively objective standard. McClenney and McClenney (1988) argue that measures be made across institutions, regardless of size or location. They suggest that common purposes and issues far outweigh cross-college differences and that measurement should revolve around explicit statements of purpose. Moore (1986) and Ewell (1988) concur, stating that the outcomes to be measured emerge directly from the mission statement that each college develops. Vaughn and Templin (1987) suggest that a "value-added" standard be considered, both in terms of the institution to the student and the institution to the community. Finally, Dodson (1987) suggests that program quality and program access are different and should not be confused. In the context of institutional effectiveness then, care should be taken not only to measure each of the items separately, but indeed to include both, as each represents one fundamental aspect of the community college mission.

In summary, the literature identifies five key considerations in the study of institutional effectiveness in community and technical colleges.

- **Accountability.** Community and technical colleges are increasingly responsible to a number of communities, internal as well as external, in terms of their effectiveness. As such, the documentation of effectiveness will be of continuing importance to the survival of the institution.

- **Flexibility.** Community and technical colleges vary in terms of size, location, and educational orientation. The measurement of effectiveness must be sensitive to this aspect of postsecondary instruction.

- **Cross-institution relevance.** Although sensitive to institutional difference, measurement of effectiveness must be capable of addressing the broad issues that transcend variations in institutional purpose. As such, criteria applicable to any community or technical college should be included.

- **Measurement standards.** Traditional measurement criteria, such as enrollment, are no longer adequate standards for assessing institutional effectiveness. The literature clearly shows that quality is independent of a school's body count. Further, measurement should be quantifiable and expressed in terms of the stated goals and mission of the institution. This not only provides the maximum relevance to a specific institution, but also ensures a more accurate expression of effectiveness when a college can be assessed in terms of the actual goals it is attempting to reach.

- **Goal differentiation.** American community and technical colleges have a variety of needs and goals. One of these is the requirement to achieve a high standard of student performance. Another is to ensure that a variety of communities enjoy access to the facilities, both educational and noneducational. Insofar as mission statements tend to differentiate these goals, so must an instrument, while still subjecting both to appropriate measurement.

The Process

In response to the research on institutional effectiveness, the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges and the Center on Education and Training for Employment undertook an 18-month project to develop a process for measuring institutional effectiveness. A questionnaire was sent to the 46 member institutions of the Alliance asking them to define institutional effectiveness and to list factors for measuring it.

Using the data collected from the questionnaire, Alliance members developed a provisional definition of institutional effectiveness and grouped the measures in broad categories. A DACUM process was used to lead the group to consensus. A seven-member Task Force then edited, refined, and synthesized the group's work for final presentation in a chart format. Following is a summary of this work.

> **NOTE: DACUM (Developing A Curriculum), as described by Sinnett (1974), is a methodology in which a "panel of experts" analyzes issues related to a problem in a systematic fashion and then details the components of the issue by group consensus. The components are then formulated as functions of the topic and are developed into a chart that shows the relationships between topics and their components. The Center on Education and Training for Employment at The Ohio State University is a leading expert in the DACUM process. Staff conduct workshops to train individuals to be DACUM facilitators. DACUM analysis has many uses; among them are curriculum development, student counseling and recruitment, training needs assessment, worker performance evaluations, competency test development, and job descriptions. Contact the Center if you wish additional information about DACUM.**

Definition

First, to assess an institution's effectiveness it is necessary to understand what institutional effectiveness is. According to the Alliance's work, *institutional effectiveness is the process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals, and using the data to form assessments in an ongoing cycle of goal setting and planning.*

In other words, the mission statement of a college generates the definition of specific institutional goals that must be interpretable in terms of specific indicators. These indicators, when measured, yield data about the effectiveness of the realization of the goal. Effectiveness, therefore, can be improved and internal comparability established. This permits an interpretation of the progress of the institution to perform better in terms of the goal over time, the only genuine measure of effectiveness. Alternatively, goals can be changed as a result of the data, yielding new indicators. As well, mission statements can be revised as goals become realized or in order to constitute them in greater conformity with reality. Figure 1 is an illustration of this process.

Areas of Inquiry

The next task in assessing effectiveness is to identify the areas of inquiry, or the major issues that support the mission and goals of the college. In refining and synthesizing the work of the Alliance, the Task Force came up with six areas of inquiry that they believe are generic to all colleges. Although individual colleges may have additional scopes of responsibility beyond those cited in response to its obligations to its service area, the Alliance maintains that these six areas are particularly crucial elements to the delivery of both postsecondary education and quality of community life.

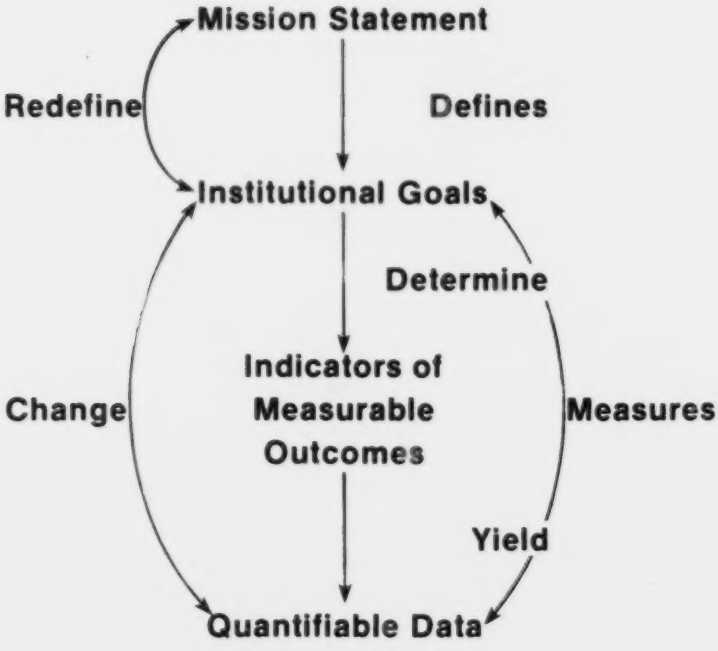

Figure 1. The model of institutional effectiveness

The six areas identified by the Alliance and a brief explanation for each are as follows:

1. **Access and equity.** The basic responsibility of community and technical colleges is to ensure all citizens of their communities the availability of post-secondary education services, regardless of their backgrounds or needs for special assistance. It is, therefore, the responsibility of the college to make necessary provisions for students and to provide those services and elements of access that would make such opportunity realistic for prospective students.

2. **Employment preparation and placement.** Central to the purposes of community and technical colleges is preparing the work force of the future and increasingly retraining workers for the present. Of importance in this regard is the degree of economic and vocational interface between the college and the community, with special emphasis on the dimensions and needs of the local labor market.

3. **College/university transfer.** Traditionally, the role of the community college has been to provide its students with the availability to make effective transition to 4-year colleges and universities. Despite great changes in the roles of 2-year colleges in recent years, these institutions still retain a major responsibility in this area. Effectiveness as a college still depends, then, on quality outcomes in assisting its students to achieve baccalaureate degrees.

4. **Economic development.** A community or technical college can make a great contribution to the economic development of the community it serves. Indeed, in a rapidly changing economy driven by job growth, plant relocation, and technological transformation, communities have found it both necessary and prudent to seek new business and industry aggressively. It is in this regard that community and technical colleges can "add value" to a community, by ensuring the prominence, access, and relevance of postsecondary education to the the community and by providing a prospective employer who is considering entry into the local labor market with a confident view of the ability of a community to provide appropriately trained workers for present and future needs.

5. **College/community partnerships.** Another "value-added" dimension to the mission of community and technical colleges is the degree of interface the college and the community experience in a variety of areas, including community use of college facilities, knowledge about the availability of college services, and the degree of participation of both students and faculty in the community and community members in the college. It is the contention of the Alliance that these outcomes are measurable and central to a college's mission.

6. **Cultural and cross-cultural development.** Inherent in the access and equity responsibilities of a college is the incorporation of a wide variety of persons of various racial, ethnic, religious, and other social groups seeking education and/or training. This presents an opportunity, even a responsibility, for the college to serve as a catalyst for cross-cultural awareness and sharing. Equally, it is the case in many communities that the college serves as a major community resource for awareness of and participation in the arts, educational

media, and other vehicles of communication and recreation. Effective community participation includes "adding value" to the community. Additionally, the interdependence of local, national, and international labor markets creates a very practical consideration in the assessment of the degree of cultural involvement. Although the specific activities of colleges across the country may vary in terms of service delivery in these two related areas, all institutions of higher learning share a responsibility to provide the community and its students with such resources and opportunities.

Indicators

Finally, in assessing institutional effectiveness it is necessary to determine the indicators, or measures, for the areas of inquiry. Collectively, the indicators should constitute the mission statement and goals of the college, and when measured, yield data that accurately assess the degree to which the goals are being implemented.

In its work to identify appropriate indicators for each of the six areas of inquiry, the Task Force sought to ensure that the measures involved "outcome" rather than process issues. According to Losak (1988), outcomes represent a significant departure from the process measures historically employed by accrediting agencies. Through the use of outcome measures, criteria can be formalized, made more rational, and made more "public." Losak argues that "the fate of many institutions has been determined by informal, (process) measures." By utilizing outcome measures, the standards are clearer and the problems of interpretation are reduced. Hence, not only can reviewing agencies understand the data better, but they also provide some protection for the institution by allowing it to know in advance the criteria on which it will be assessed.

The Task Force identified a total of 38 indicators for the 6 areas of inquiry. For example, if the area of *Access and Equity* is part of the mission of a college, ways to measure the college's effectiveness might be *to determine the percentage of each year's high school graduates in the service area that are enrolled in the college, or the percentage of transfer credits submitted for evaluation by incoming students that are accepted*, and so on. (The 38 indicators are presented in their entirety in the next section.)

The Chart and How to Use It

As explained earlier, the Alliance's approach to institutional effectiveness is defined in terms of the college's mission and its goals and the assessment of outcome measurements. As a hypothesis, it is asserted that goals can be expressed in terms of indicators of these outcomes, which, when measured, yield quantifiable data. These data, in turn, report the degree of effectiveness with which the college achieves its goals. Alternatively, the data also provide the basis for constructing more appropriate goals and mission, if necessary.

The Alliance's work is summarized in the *Chart for Institutional Effectiveness*. The chart takes into account six issues (and their respective indicators) with which all colleges may deal, and it is flexible enough to accommodate the diversity of schools. As such, the chart can be used by virtually any postsecondary entity as the foundation on which to build an assessment instrument.

How to Build Your Own Assessment Instrument

To develop your assessment instrument, complete the three steps below.

Step 1. Examine the six areas of inquiry listed on the *Chart for Institutional Effectiveness* and select (or add) only those areas that are appropriate to your institution's mission and goals.

Step 2. Identify indicators for each area of inquiry. Again, you may use those provided on the chart and/or select others that you feel are more appropriate to your situation.

Step 3. Determine realistic measures (e.g., percentages, number comparisons, ratios) for each of the indicators that you have selected. Where baseline data are not available, you may wish to devise some means of obtaining the information. Here are examples of measures that you might consider:

- Percentage of high school graduates in service area attending college
- Number of minority persons on faculty and staff
- Employment status of recent graduates
- Number of graduates who continue education at senior institutions
- Percentage of students who transfer and obtain bachelor's degrees

- **Survey of business needs compared to current programs**
- **Number of customized programs provided to local businesses**
- **Percentage of population in service area who use facilities**
- **Rates of change in student/faculty participation in special events**
- **Job histories of program completers**

Finally, in examining the *Chart for Institutional Effectiveness*, you will find several terms that are commonly used by educators today. Because their meaning sometimes varies from one person to another, we have defined these words as they were used for the purpose of developing this chart.

Competence. A learning outcome defined by the college using various strategies, for example, the DACUM process.

Customized training. Training designed specifically for employer needs, both in content and form.

Disadvantaged/at-risk students. Students who are physically handicapped or economically disadvantaged, adults in need of training or retraining, single parents or homemakers, the incarcerated, limited English-proficient speakers, the functionally illiterate, the emotionally disadvantaged, or the learning disabled.

Educational goals. The outcomes the students intend to achieve at the time of registration, including education for a job, self-interest, the first 2 years of college, and/or attaining a certificate, diploma, or degree.

General education. The courses that are traditional liberal arts courses such as the humanities and social sciences.

Native students. Students who began their studies at the college or university.

Nontechnical education. The related courses taken as part of a technical education program.

Program completers. Students who complete certificate, diploma or degree programs, or a certain number of credits as defined by the college.

Technology transfer. The transfer of technical information for the purpose of improving manufacturing productivity; technology transfer information is usually accessed through national databases.

Chart
for
Institutional Effectiveness

Chart for Institut

Prepared by the National Alliance

Areas of Inquiry	Indicators			
A **Access and Equity**	A-1 Enrollment of local high school graduates	A-2 Acceptance of transfer credits	A-3 Credit received for non-traditional learning	A-4 Student body age mix vs. adult age mix in service area
	A-10 Student tuition and fee increases vs. growth of income in service area	A-11 Student enrollment per year per 1,000 area inhabitants		
B **Employment Preparation and Placement**	B-1 Placement of program completers in work-related jobs within reasonable amount of time	B-2 Completion of required licensure/ certificate exams by program completers	B-3 Employers' satisfaction with competence of technical program completers	B-4 Employers' satisfaction with competence of nontechnical program completers (employ-ability skills, work attitude, communication skills, human relations skills)
C **College /University Transfer**	C-1 Students who actually transfer to senior institutions vs. those who plan to	C-2 Acceptance of associate degree/2-year college credits by senior institutions	C-3 Grade point averages of students who complete 2 years in a 2-year college vs. grade point averages of students who complete 2 years at a 4-year institution	
D **Economic Development**	D-1 Associate degrees obtained by adults within service area	D-2 Regular classroom or customized training provided to displaced or unemployed workers within service area	D-3 Placement of displaced and unemployed workers who complete regular classroom or customized training	
	D-7 Jobs created or retained in the service area as a result of the college's work with employers	D-8 Use of educational services by business personnel to start, improve, or expand their business		
E **College/ Community Partnerships**	E-1 Successful fulfillment of requests for college services made by individuals and/ or public and private sector groups	E-2 Satisfaction of individuals and/or public and private sector groups receiving college services		
F **Cultural and Cross-Cultural Development**	F-1 Participation of (credit) students in cultural and cross-cultural activities of the college	F-2 Participation of faculty and staff in cultural and cross-cultural activities of the college		

ional Effectiveness

of Community and Technical Colleges

-5 Faculty-staff-dministration opulation mix vs. rvice area pop-ation mix/student ody population mix	A-6 Student body population mix vs. population that is disadvantaged or at risk in service area	A-7 Educational goal attainment by student population that is disadvantaged or at risk	A-8 Educational goal attainment by total student body population	A-9 Services offered by college (child care, transportation, housing)vs. college attendance
-5 Program ompleters satisfac-ion with technical ducation reparation	B-6 Program completers' satisfaction with nontechnical education preparation	B-7 Program completer's satisfaction general education preparation		
C-4 Transfer students' general education competencies related to their intended major vs. those of students who complete 2 years at a 4-year institution		C-5 Baccalaureate degrees obtained by transfer students		
D-4 Students (credit/noncredit) employed or retained by contracting employers following customized training programs for new, expanding, and retooling industries		D-5 Request made for information and problem-solving services (such as technology transfer) that result in cost-savings, new or improved products or techniques, or client satisfaction		D-6 Annual labor market needs met by program completers
E-3 Community's use of educational resources (library, presentations, and facilities)		E-4 Participation by faculty, staff, students and program completers in community services		
F-3 Participation of adult population of the service area in cultural and cross-cultural activities of the college				

Institutional Effectiveness is the process of articulating the mission of the college, setting goals, defining how the college and community will know when the goals are being met, and using the data from assessment in an ongoing cycle of goal-setting and planning.

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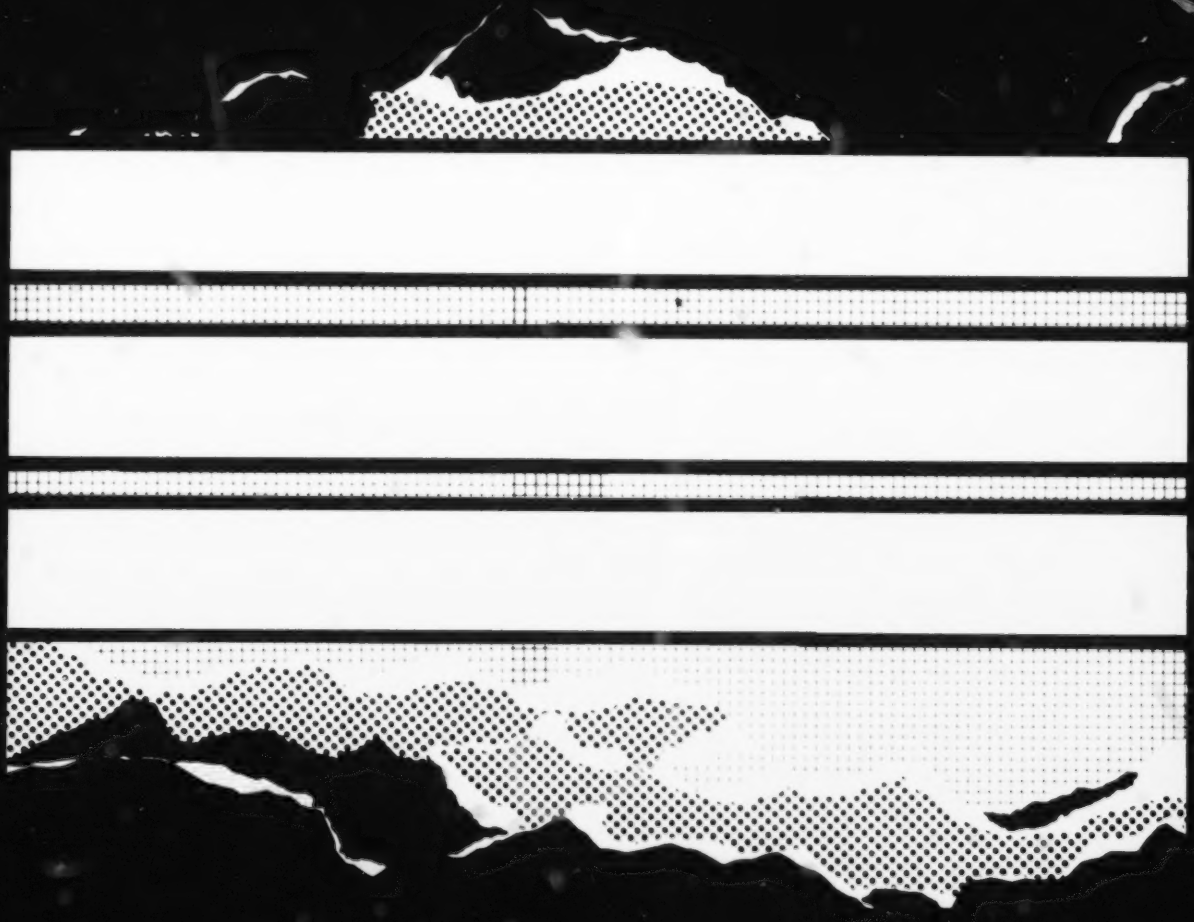

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